Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor Date

Dr. Faith Hensrud, President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Bemidji State University

Name of Institution

Bemidji, MN

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The Quality Initiative Proposal is due no later than August 31of Year 7 (and will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5). Submit the proposal as a PDF file to [pathways@hlcommission.org](mailto:pathways@hlcommission.org) with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution’s name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

Title: Enhancing Student Persistence and Retention

Bemidji State University has begun a two-pronged initiative to address student persistence and retention that involves both the academic and student affairs sectors of the university. On the academic side, the university is working with the John N Gardner Institute's Gateways to Completion to redesign selected "gateway" courses. On the student affairs side, the university has implemented a success coaching initiative for select students. These initiatives are already in process and will likely continue for many years.

Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

1. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

There is sufficient information on retention and persistence driving Bemidji State University's choice of project for the Quality Initiative.

• The six-year graduation rate for the fall 2009 cohort was 46 percent.

• The six-year graduation rate for students of color for the fall 2009 cohort was 22 percent.

• For the fall 2013 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year was 88 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two was 68 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three was 54 percent.

• For students of color in the 2013 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year was 78 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two was 60 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three was 40 percent.

• Failing an entry-level course can have a traumatic impact on a student’s overall success at an institution. As an example, of the Fall 2011 entering freshmen at BSU who took one of our three largest mathematics courses as their first mathematics course and either failed or withdrew from the course, only 11 percent (7 of 61) had either graduated or were still attending BSU in spring 2015.

1. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

Bemidji State University recognizes that enhancing student persistence and retention necessarily involves the separate as well as collaborative efforts of academic affairs and student affairs personnel and programming. The university proposes a two-pronged approach designed to increase persistence, retention, and completion.

1. Bemidji State University will begin a three-year commitment with the John N. Gardner Institute’s Gateways to Completion (G2C) program as of fall 2016. This three-year program uses predictive analytics tools to identify foundational, high enrollment courses with historically high D-F-W rates and provides guidance in the redesign of “gateway” courses to improve student performance.

2. Bemidji State University started fall 2015 piloting a First Year Beaver Success Coaching initiative. A research project at Indiana University, Bloomington concluded that equal concentration on academic matters and non-academic elements of student life had the most significant impact on student retention (Smith 2003). Most departing students (75-85 percent) leave an institution for reasons other than poor academic performance (Noel 1985; Tinto 1993). The initiative provides intentional information and support related to the social, financial, physical, and emotional aspects of students’ enrollment and persistence. An outcome of this initiative is to help each student create what is termed a Student LifeCycle Management Plan addressing the four domains of student success including education planning, progress tracking, advising (supplemental), and early intervention. Each student is asked a set of common questions regarding pre-enrollment characteristics and expectations that is used by the success coach to learn more about the student and how they can be best served. This initiative identifies a cohort of students likely to benefit from this initiative based on pre-enrollment factors. This cohort of first time-full time freshmen receives success coaching during their first two semesters of enrollment. To avoid duplication of services, students already receiving similar support/assistance from TRiO, Disability Services, American Indian Resource Center and Advising Success Center are not included in the cohort.

Our efforts are driven by the Bemidji State University vision, “We educate people to lead inspired lives.” In addition, the university’s mission includes a stated focus on student success [underline added]:

“We create an innovative, interdisciplinary and highly accessible learning environment committed to student success and a sustainable future of our communities, state and planet. Through the transformative power of the liberal arts, education in the professions, and robust engagement of our students, we instill and promote service to others, preservation of the earth, and respect and appreciation for the diverse peoples of our region and world.”

Bemidji State University’s two-pronged initiative is intended to improve the ability of students to persist and ultimately to graduate. Consequently, it gets to the heart of the issue of ensuring we carry out our mission as broadly as possible. The initiatives, therefore, are central to the stated goals of the institution, and relevant and significant to what we hope to accomplish. All efforts are likely to continue beyond the Quality Initiative period. The initiative will include milestones to be achieved during the period encompassed by the Quality Initiative, but the institution will remain committed to improving student retention and graduation. At a time of constrained state funding, our ability to retain and graduate students has become more important than ever as a way to maintain institutional financial sustainability.

Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose

1. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

Bemidji State University set as its overall goals to increase overall persistence and retention and we recognize that these efforts must be ongoing. During the time-frame covered by this initiative (fall 2016-spring 2018), information on persistence and retention will continue to be monitored enabling the institution to assess overall progress of students matriculating fall 2016 and fall 2017. We have set the following short term persistence and retention goals.

• For the fall 2016 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year will be at least 90 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two will be at least 70 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three will be at least 56 percent.

• For the fall 2017 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year will be at least 92 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two will be at least 72 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three will be at least 58 percent.

• For students of color in the 2016 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year will be at least 80 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two will be at least 62 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three will be at least 42 percent.

• For students of color in the 2017 cohort, the fall to spring retention rate during the first year will be at least 82 percent, the retention rate to fall of year two will be at least 64 percent, and the retention rate to fall of year three will be at least 44 percent.

• Beginning fall 2017 and continuing spring 2018 and succeeding semesters we will lower D-F-W rates in selected Gateway to Completion (G2C) courses by at least 5 percent.

1. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.

The intended goals, defined milestones and clear processes for evaluating progress are outlined below.

Gateway to Completion Goals

1. Improve student learning in gateway courses as measured by survey responses and course outcomes/objectives;

2. Increase student success in gateway courses as measured by grades;

3. Increase student success in gateway courses as measured by retention rates;

4. Increase student success in gateway courses as measured by graduation/program completion

Gateway to Completion Implementation and Evaluation Steps 2016-2017

1. Create initial steering committee

2. Complete Gateway Course Analytics Inventory (GCAI) (Historic Data Analytics)

3. Identify course(s) & round out task force

4. Administer Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) Survey

5. Conduct course-level review of principles and key performance indicators

6. Create initial action plan(s)

7. Begin Analytics Process Collaborative (includes workshop)

8. Begin Teaching and Learning Academy (includes workshop)

9. Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting and Gateway Course Experience Conference

Gateway to Completion Implementation and Evaluation Steps, 2017-2018

1. Implement plan(s) using Implementation Framework/Templates

2. Update Gateway Course Analytics Inventory

3. Re-administer the Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) Survey

4. Begin use of predictive analytics and dashboards

5. Begin use of engaging pedagogies

6. Continue with Analytics Process Collaborative (includes workshop)

7. Continue with Teaching & Learning Academy (includes workshop)

8. Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting & Gateway Course Experience Conference

Gateway to Completion Implementation and Evaluation Steps, 2018-2019

1. Refine implementation of plan(s) using Refinement Templates/Framework

2. Update Gateway Course Analytics Inventory

3. Re-administer the Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG)

4. Continue use of predictive analytics and dashboards

5. Continue use/refinement of engaging pedagogies

6. Continue with Analytics Process Collaborative (includes workshop)

7. Attend G2C Community of Practice Meeting & Gateway Course Experience Conference

First Year Beaver Success Coaching Initiative - Overall Goals

1. Provide intentional information and support related to the social, financial, physical, and emotional aspects of student’s enrollment and persistence.

2. Identify a cohort of students most likely to benefit based on pre-enrollment factors.

3. Increase the number of intentional interactions between identified students and Beaver Success Coaches.

4. Student completion of Beaver Success survey identifying student self- perceptions of ability to succeed and graduate.

5. Student satisfaction regarding experiences with Beaver Success program.

First Year Beaver Success Coaching Initiative Implementation and Evaluation Steps, 2016-2017

1. Put out a call for Beaver Success Coaches to current MSUAASF members.

2. Conduct training session for coaches

3. Assign students

4. Schedule coaching sessions

5. Schedule follow-up information sessions with success coaches

6. Hold a wrap-up session with success coaches

7. Gather data from coaches and from students

8. Review post assessment survey information from students regarding experiences in program and changes in perception of pre-enrollment characteristics.

9. Beaver Success coaches will complete narrative story about the students in their cohort and identify strategies for implementation in subsequent years.

10. Quantitatively identify number of interactions with students and their coaches.

First Year Beaver Success Coaching Initiative Implementation and Evaluation Steps, 2017-2018

1. Put out a call for Success Coaches to current MSUAASF members.

2. Conduct training session for coaches

3. Assign students

4. Schedule coaching sessions

5. Schedule follow-up information sessions with success coaches

6. Hold a wrap-up session with success coaches

7. Gather data from coaches and from students

8. Suggest modifications for next academic year

First Year Beaver Success Coaching Initiative Implementation and Evaluation Steps, 2018-2019

1. Put out a call for Success Coaches to current MSUAASF members.

2. Conduct training session for coaches

3. Assign students

4. Schedule coaching sessions

5. Schedule follow-up information sessions with success coaches

6. Hold a wrap-up session with success coaches

7. Gather data from coaches and from students

8. Suggest modifications for next academic year

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

1. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

These initiatives have been discussed in Executive Leadership Team meetings, with the President’s Extended Cabinet and the Deans’ Council, in campus-wide Council for Student Success, and was the subject of a campus-wide survey regarding recommendations for the Quality Initiative. In all these venues, the focus on student persistence and retention rose to the top in terms of the most appropriate topic for the institution to adopt for a Quality Initiative and the efforts that have been and are being put in place are supported across the campus. These efforts are pervasive; arguably every employee on campus will play a role in the success of the initiative. The leaders of these initiatives include the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, the Director of Institutional Accreditation, the Director of the Center for Professional Development, the Deans of the Academic Colleges, local faculty union leaders, the Dean of Student Support Services, the Dean of Student Success, the Director of the Honors and Liberal Education Programs, the Director of the American Indian Resource Center, the Director of the Advising Success Center, the Director of Career Services, and the Director of TRiO programs.

1. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

Key people and groups are involved in each of these efforts.

• Gateway to Completion involves participation at several levels. Bemidji State University has senior leaders, the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Director of Institutional Research, and the Director of Institutional Accreditation, that serve as the overall project leaders/managers. There are also a course-specific committees populated by faculty – one committee for each course that is selected for participation in G2C. Each course committee is led by one chair or two co-chairs. Likely these course-specific committees will draw membership from the department or program in which the course is academically housed. Finally, there is a steering committee. This committee is comprised of the three program managers, the course-specific committee chairs, and other key stakeholders, such as the Liberal Education Director, the Director of the Center for Professional Development, the Assistant Director of the Center for Professional Developent, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Director of the Writing Resource Center, a member from TRiO Student Support Services, the Director of the Advising Success Center, a staff person from E-Learning Support, and one or more executive leaders from the Faculty Association. The exact composition of the steering committee is still being fleshed out, but will be finalized in September 2016.

• Key individuals involved in the Beaver Success Initiative include coaches who are members of the Minnesota State Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF). They represent a cross section of areas that provide service to the university including student affairs, academic affairs, and other campus constituencies. This group is led by the Director of the Advising Success Center. Other key components include the application of technologies that facilitate and disseminate communications and research to coaches and students.

1. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

Bemidji State University has set aside the financial, technological, human and other resources necessary to accomplish the two initiatives. The three-year commitment to the John N. Gardner Institute will involve approximately $150,000 spread across three years. The expected expense for the Beaver Success Coaching Initiative is $35,000 per semester or $70,000 each year. The funding source will be from carryforward funds in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Access and Opportunity allocation that is received from MnSCU annually. Funds for year two and three will be allocated from this grant as well. In addition, the university has put the key people with the necessary expertise in place to lead the initiatives. The implementation of these initiatives also has training as necessary built into its delivery.

Each month progress on each prong of the initiative will be presented at the Council for Student Success and periodic updates will be disseminated through already established channels of communication – the Executive Leadership Team, President’s Cabinet, meet and confers, and campus-wide large group updates. Any recommendations arising from the implementation of these initiatives will also be funneled through the already established decision-making channels. These same processes of communication and problem-solving will be used to tackle challenges as they arise.

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

(The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

1. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

This initiative will continue beyond the current accreditation cycle. During the next three years, however, we have outlined the list of planned activities and these have been discussed earlier. The Gardner Institute has experience with the timeline it has proposed for the activities listed. The leaders and staff in student affairs also agrees with the reasonableness of the timeline associated with the proposed activities for the Student Success Coaching project.

BSU is involved in comprehensive campus-wide efforts that support the two-pronged plan. For example, Bemidji State University has joined Campus Compact, and beginning fall 2017 students will be engaged in civic action opportunities both on and off campus. Engaging students in this manner is considered by AAC&U to be a high impact practice that can also aid student persistence and retention. Beginning this fall, BSU is also launching the Best You @ BSU Pathways to Wellness Initiative. Each incoming first year student will be asked to complete an individualized wellness assessment on six dimensions (career, environmental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social), receive comprehensive wellness planning and coaching, be apprised of programming and resources in each wellness dimension, measure accomplishments, and be provided with incentives for accomplishments. In addition, TRiO, Disability Services, the American Indian Resource Center, and the Advising Success Center also provide valuable services to students that factor positively in student persistence and retention.

Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

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